

Message Text

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51

ACTION EB-07

INFO OCT-01 ARA-06 EUR-12 EA-06 IO-10 ISO-00 INRE-00 SSO-00

NSCE-00 USIE-00 AGR-05 CEA-01 CIAE-00 COME-00 DODE-00

FRB-03 H-01 INR-07 INT-05 L-02 LAB-04 NSAE-00 NSC-05

PA-01 RSC-01 AID-05 CIEP-01 SS-15 STR-01 TAR-01

TRSE-00 PRS-01 SP-02 FEAE-00 OMB-01 AF-06 NEA-09

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INFO AMEMBASSY CANBERRA

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AMEMBASSY OTTAWA

AMEMBASSY TOKYO

AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON

AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES

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DEPT PASS AGRICULTURE AND STR

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: GATT

SUBJECT: CONSULTATIVE GROUP ON MEAT

REFS: A. GENEVA 512 B. STATE 023185

1. SUMMARY. IN THE FEBURARY 3 MEETING OF THE GATT COUNCIL,
AUSTRALIA'S LONG-STANDING PROPOSAL FOR THE CREATION OF A CONSULTA-
TIVE GROUP ON MEAT MET WITH WIDE-SPREAD SUPPORT BUT EEC AND JAPAN
CONTINUED REFUSE TO AGREE ARGUING ANY DECISION SHOULD BE PUT OFF
UNTIL AFTER TNC. AUSTRALIA THEREUPON REQUESTED A FORMAL COUNCIL
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VOTE ON THIS ISSUE. SINCE THE COUCIL TRADITIONALLY ACTS BY

CONSENSUS, THE AUSTRALIAN'S REQUEST FOR A VOTE WAS UNPRECEDENTED. COUNCIL CHAIRMAN APPEALED TO AUSTRALIA NOT TO INSIST ON VOTE AND NEARLY ALL DELEGATIONS SUPPORTED. AFTER CONTACT GROUP MEETING, THE CHAIR PROPOSED AN ADJOURNMENT OF THIS AGENDA UNTIL FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 7. AUSTRALIA AGREED BUT INSISTED ON RIGHT TO PUT MATTER TO A VOTE ON THAT DATE. GUIDANCE REQUESTED. END SUMMARY.

2. IN THE FEBRUARY 3 GATT COUNCIL MEETING, AUSTRALIA REPEATED ITS LONG-STANDING PROPOSAL FOR THE FORMATION OF A CONSULTATIVE GROUP ON MEAT WITHIN GATT (SEE REFTELS). THE TERMS OF REFERENCE OF THIS GROUP WOULD BE THOSE CONTAINED IN GATT DOCUMENT T/4119, SUPPLEMENTED BY REFERENCE TO CATTLE AS WELL AS MEAT. MOST DELEGATIONS, INCLUDING THE U.S. SUPPORTED THE AUSTRALIAN PROPOSAL EXCEPT JAPAN AND THE EEC.

3. JAPAN PROPOSED FURTHER EXAMINATION OF THE AUSTRALIAN PROPOSAL AND SUGGESTED TO AWAIT THE OUTCOME OF THE TNC BEFORE MAKING A FINAL DECISION. THE EEC TOOK THE SAME POSITION IN VIEW OF A POSSIBLE LINK BETWEEN THIS GROUP AND THE MTN.

4. THE CHAIR EXPLAINED THAT IN VIEW OF THE REFERENCES TO THE LINK BETWEEN THE CONSULTATIVE GROUP AND THE MTN, MADE BY VARIOUS DELEGATIONS, THE TERMS OF REFERENCE OF THE CONSULTATIVE GROUP SHOULD BE MORE PRECISELY DEFINED. HE PROPOSED THE FOLLOWING SUPPLEMENTARY TERMS: QUOTE. THE WORK OF THE GROUP SHOULD BE CLOSELY COORDINATED WITH THE MTN AND SHALL NOT IN ANY WAY HINDER THE WORK ON MEAT AND CATTLE IN THE MTN. UNQUOTE.

5. AUSTRALIA, INDICATING IT WAS UNDER FIRM INSTRUCTION TO HAVE MATTER SETTLED ONE WAY OR THE OTHER AT THIS COUNCIL MEETING, PROPOSED IMMEDIATE VOTE ON ISSUE. THE CHAIR APPEALED TO THE AUSTRALIANS NOT TO ASK FOR A FORMAL VOTE, POINTING OUT THAT THE GATT COUNCIL HAS A LONG TRADITION OF OPERATING ON THE BASIS OF CONSENSUS RATHER THAN FORMAL VOTING. THE CHAIR'S POSITION OF THE PROCEDURAL ASPECTS OF THE QUESTION WAS STRONGLY SUPPORTED BY MOST DELEGATIONS. THE U.S. EXPLAINED THAT WHILE IT FAVORS THE SUBSTANCE OF THE AUSTRALIAN PROPOSAL CONCERNING THE FORMATION OF A CONSULTATIVE GROUP, IT DOUBTED THE WISDOM OF AN IMMEDIATE VOTE ON THIS ISSUE. WE FAVORED A BROADLY BASED GROUP INCLUDING ALL KEY IMPORTERS AND EXPORTERS. WE NOTED THAT LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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NO DELEGATIONS HAD ACTUALLY OPPOSED CREATION OF GROUP BUT THAT TWO HAD ASKED FOR DEFERRAL OF DECISION UNTIL AFTER TNC. WE FELT THIS UNNECESSARY IN THAT GROUP COULD BE CREATED AND LINK TO TNC COULD BE DETERMINED SUBSEQUENTLY. IF OTHERS FELT OTHERWISE, HOWEVER, WE WOULD GO ALONG WITH POSTPONING MATTER FOR SEVERAL WEEKS IN INTEREST HAVING ALL KEY COUNTRIES INCLUDED. WE ALSO SUPPORTED CHAIR ON IMPORTANCE MAINTAINING GATT TRADITION OF OPERATING BY

CONSENSUS. (WE PRIVATELY INFORMED AUSTRALIAN REP THAT WE STRONGLY REGRETTED THEIR SUDDEN DECISION TO PRESS MATTER TO VOTE WHICH TAKEN WITHOUT ADVANCE CONSULTATION WITH OTHER SUPPORTERS OF PROPOSAL AND WHICH PREJUDICED CHANCES OF GETTING BROADLY BASED GROUP.)

6. NOTWITHSTANDING THE GENERAL FEELING IN FAVOR OF DECIDING ON THIS ISSUE BY CONSENSUS, AND STRONG PRESSURE ON AUSTRALIA IN THIS SENSE IN CONTACT GROUP MEETING, AUSTRALIA ANNOUNCED THAT IT RESERVED RIGHT PUT THE QUESTION TO A VOTE ON FRIDAY, FEB 7 WHEN COUNCIL SESSION WILL BE RESUMED. AUSTRALIA SOMEWHAT MODIFIED PROPOSAL, HOWEVER, BY SUGGESTING THAT IT WOULD NOT EXPECT A FORMAL VOTE WOULD BE TAKEN ON THAT DAY BUT MERELY THAT A DECISION WOULD BE MADE TO VOTE ON THIS ISSUE, AND THAT POSTAL BALLOTS WOULD BE ISSUED.

7. ACTION REQUESTED. IN VIEW INTRANSIGENT AUSTRALIAN POSITION, WE BELIEVE THERE IS STRONG POSSIBILITY THAT AUSTRALIA WILL INSIST ON VOTE AT FRIDAY COUNCIL MEETING. WHETHER THIS WOULD BE VOTE BY COUNCIL, OR VOTE BY CPS VIA POSTAL BALLOT, IS UNCERTAIN. IN VIEW GENERAL US POSITION CONCERNING VOTING IN INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS, BELIEVE WE SHOULD RELUCTANTLY SUPPORT AUSTRALIANS RIGHT REPEAT RIGHT TO HAVE MATTER PUT TO A VOTE IF THEY INSIST. WE RECOMMEND THIS, EVEN THOUGH GATT PROVISIONS RELATING TO THIS PARTICULAR CASE ARE MURKY BECAUSE OF UNCLEAR MANDATE OF COUNCIL AND ABSENCE OF FORMAL COUNCIL RULES OF PROCEDURE. IF VOTE IS TAKEN IN COUNCIL ITSELF OR BY POSTAL BALLOT WHICH WOULD BE CAST BY MISSION, WE WOULD NEED GUIDANCE WHETHER TO VOTE AFFIRMATELY, NEGATIVELY, OR TO ABSTAIN. SINCE U.S. SUPPORTED LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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AUSTRALIA PROPOSAL, BUT ON ASSUMPTION IT WOULD BE NEGOTIATED BY CONSENSUS AND THAT GROUP WOULD COMPRISE KEY IMPORTERS AND IMPORTERS (WHICH UNLIKELY IF PROPOSAL RAMMED THROUGH BY VOTE) MISSION WOULD RECOMMEND ABSTENTION. WE WOULD ALSO APPRECIATE ANY GUIDANCE WASHINGTON MAY WISH TO GIVE ON TERMS OF REFERENCE OF GROUP FOR EVENT THESE FURTHER DISCUSSED. REQUEST GUIDANCE ABOVE POINTS BY FEBURARY 7. DALE

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